

IN THE CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently amended) A machine implemented method for collecting information from a storage server managed by use of a multi-appliance management application (MMA), the method comprising:

dividing, by the MMA, data stored in the storage server into a plurality of sections;

assigning, by the MMA, the plurality of sections to a plurality of agents, wherein each of the plurality of agents is an independent system which is a separate device from the storage server and the MMA, and wherein each of the plurality of agents communicates with the storage server via a network;

~~using an agent the plurality of agents to scan the plurality of sections the storage server and to collect information regarding files stored by the storage server, wherein the agent is an independent processing system which is a separate device from the storage server and the MMA, and wherein the agent communicates with the storage server via a network;~~

summarizing the information and creating a summary by using the plurality of agents
agent;

storing, by the plurality of agents, the summary on a database server; and

outputting, by the MMA, the summary to a user interface.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising analyzing the files and generating statistics regarding the files.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising analyzing the files and generating a table and a histogram regarding the files.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the statistics comprise a number of files, a size of files, and an average access time of files.

5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising transferring the summary to the MMA before storing the summary on the database server.
6. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising accessing the table and the histogram using a graphical user interface (GUI).
7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein accessing further comprises accessing the table and the histogram over the Internet.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein collecting information comprises using a file thread to examine files and using a directory thread to examine directories.
9. (Currently amended) A machine readable storage medium having stored thereon executable program code which, when executed, causes a machine to ~~perform a method for collecting~~ collect information from a storage server managed by a multi-appliance management application (MMA), the ~~method~~ executable program code comprising:
 - program code for receiving, from the MMA, an assignment of a section of data stored in the storage server;
 - program code for scanning the section of data storage server and collecting information regarding files stored by the storage server, wherein the storage server, the MMA, and the machine are separate devices, wherein the machine agent is an independent processing system which communicates with the storage server via a network;
 - program code for summarizing the information and creating a summary, and storing the summary on a database server; and
 - program code for outputting, by the MMA, the summary in response to a user's request at the MMA.
10. (Currently amended) The machine readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the ~~method~~ executable program code further comprises program code for analyzing the files and generating statistics regarding the files.

11. (Currently amended) The machine readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the ~~method~~ executable program code further comprises program code for analyzing the files and generating a table and a histogram regarding the files.

12. (Currently amended) The machine readable storage medium of claim 10, wherein the statistics comprise a number of files, a size of files, and an average access time of files.

13. (Currently amended) The machine readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein the ~~method~~ executable program code further comprises program code for transferring the summary to the MMA before storing the summary on the database server.

14-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The machine readable storage medium of claim 9, wherein collecting information comprises using a file thread to examine files and using a directory thread to examine directories.

17. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a multi-appliance management application (MMA) to manage a server coupled to a mass storage device and to divide data stored in the server into a plurality of sections;

an agent coupled to the server and the MMA via a network, the agent to scan one of the plurality of sections assigned by the MMA ~~the mass storage device~~ and to create a summary including cumulative statistics about data on the mass storage device, wherein the agent, the MMA, and the server are separate devices, wherein the agent is an independent processing system on the network; and

a database server coupled to the MMA and the agent to store the summary, wherein the summary is used by the MMA for outputting to a user interface.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising a monitor coupled to the agent and the database server to display the summary.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the server is a file server.
20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the server has a first file system and the agent has a second file system, the first file system is different from the second file system.
21. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the summary includes histogram information about file system usage by file types.
22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the file server includes files stored in directories.
23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the summary includes cumulative information about the directories.
24. (Currently amended) A method for collecting information from a file server comprising:
at a multi-appliance monitoring application (MMA), monitoring the file server and
dividing data stored in the file server into the plurality of sections;
at the MMA, instructing an agent to scan one of the plurality of sections ~~the file server~~,
wherein said agent is an independent processing system which communicates with the file server
via a network, and wherein said agent is configured to execute a machine implemented method
comprising:
collecting information regarding files stored in the one of the plurality of sections
~~by the file server~~;
summarizing the information and creating a summary; and
transmitting the summary to the MMA, and
receiving the summary at the MMA, wherein the agent, the MMA, and the file server are
separate devices.
25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the summary includes statistics regarding the
files and the file server.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the statistics include a number of files, a size of files, and an average access time of files.

27. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein storing the summary further comprises storing the summary in a table.

28. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein storing the summary further comprises storing the summary in a histogram.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) A method for offloading tasks from a management server that manages a storage server, the method comprising:

using an agent in place of the management server to receive a section of data stored in the storage server and assigned by the management server, to scan the section of data storage server, to collect information regarding files stored by the storage server and to summarize the collected information into a summary, wherein the agent is an independent processing system which is a separate device from the management server and the storage server and which communicates with the storage server via a network; and

storing the summary into a database for retrieval by the management server.

31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising using the agent in place of the management server to analyze the files and generate statistics regarding the files.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the management server comprises a multi-appliance monitoring application (MMA).

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the agent, the storage server and the MMA communicate over one or more networks.

34-39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

distributing a plurality of agent devices over one or more networks;

collecting, by the agent devices, information about a plurality of sections of data maintained by one or more storage servers over the one or more networks, wherein the plurality of sections of data is assigned by a multi-appliance management application (MMA) to the agent devices;

summarizing, by the agent devices, the collected information; and

sending the summarized ~~collected~~ information from the agent devices to the MMA a ~~multi-appliance management application (MMA)~~, wherein each of the agent devices, the MMA, and the one or more storage servers are separate devices, and wherein each of the agent devices is an independent processing system.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 40, wherein the agent devices, while collecting the information from the storage servers, use a file system that the storage servers do not use for maintaining the files.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 40, wherein one or more of the agent devices uses a file system different from a file system that one or more of the other agents use.

43. (Currently amended) A system comprising:

a multi-appliance management application (MMA) to manage one or more storage servers over one or more networks and divide data stored in the one or more storage servers into a plurality of sections; and

a plurality of agents distributed over the one or more networks, the plurality of agents collecting information about the plurality of sections ~~data maintained by the one or more storage servers~~ via a network and sending the collective information to the MMA, wherein each of the plurality of agents, the MMA, and the one or more storage servers are separate devices, and wherein each of the agent devices is an independent processing system.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein one or more of the plurality of agents, while collecting information from the one or more storage servers, use a filesystem that the one or more storage servers do not use for maintaining the files.

45. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein one or more of the plurality of agents uses a filesystem different from a filesystem that the one or more of the other agents use.